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ABSTRACT

Since an alphabetically arranged newspaper clipping file often separates those items which should be together, a classified system would be more useful in a newspaper library. The system used at the "Dayton (Ohio) Journal Herald" is based on major categories numbered 1-100, with related items in proximity. Subdivisions are provided by adding letters from a to z, with some letters retaining the same value in all categories. For example, "a" stands for a general file and "r" for research. In addition to the subject file, other files can be grouped to include living and dead personalities and foreign countries. Alphabetical and numerical lists of subject categories are provided, along with a miscellaneous subject list and directions for processing newspaper clippings. (LS)

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An Alternative System of Subject Classification for Media Libraries

by

Harish Trivedi

Dayton (Ohio) Journal Herald

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Why have an alternate system?

Although advanced electronic retrieval systems are now in use in many larger newspaper organizations, I think there is a real need for an alternative system of subject classification. Such a system is especially important to small and medium-sized newspaper libraries with limited staffs and limited financial resources. An alternative system should be easy to understand and implement, efficient and convenient in terms of practical use and easy to adapt, with some minor changes, to any computerized system at a later stage.

Because of the unique nature of newspaper clips--size, quality of paper, frequency of handling, storage and, most important of all, the volume of new clips being added each day--the prevalent systems of book classification are not suited for news clip classification.

Almost all newspaper library staffs have developed their own systems for filing and arranging clips. Generally, the clips are filed in alphabetical order.

Although this method has proved practical, it is not, strictly speaking, a classification by subject. One drawback of this system is the likelihood of having totally unrelated subjects grouped together, or of having related subjects scattered in different places (e.g. Astrology and Astroturf, or Education, Schools, College, Busing, University filed and arranged under E, S, C, B, U, etc.).

Another drawback is lack of subject control. If there is more than one person marking the paper it is very likely that the clips on race related problems in schools may end up in files marked D for Desegregation or B for Busing.

A classification system based on strict subject categories and tailored for the needs of newspaper libraries would help in achieving consistency and uniformity for present as well as future use. When such a system receives acceptance by various newspaper libraries there is less chance for confusion, doubts and duplication. "Prisons," "Jails," "Detention Centers," or "Humane Rehabilitation Centers" would have one basic number and would be located in one drawer in one place. Similarly, various space projects like Apollo, Gemini, Mariner or Pioneer would have one assigned number, and files on these space programs could be quickly found under that number.

Philosophy and Structure:

Classification is defined as "any of various systems for arranging books and other materials, especially according to subject or format." According to Dewey, classification is: "(1) An arrangement in some logical order of the whole field of knowledge or some specified portion thereof. (2) The art of arranging books or other objects in conformity with such a scheme."

In "The Subject Approach to Information," A.C. Foskett says, "The older enumerative method is to list all subjects that we are likely to need for input to the system, whether they are single concepts (simple subjects) or composite subjects. As it is not possible in practice to

foresee all the syntagmas that may arise in any subject area, it is equally not possible to list all the composite subjects in advance; sooner or later we begin to lose specificity...the modern approach is to list only simple subjects and give the indexer the means to combine these elements at will, so that he can insert a composite subject into the system if it arises." We have incorporated the "modern approach" in the structure of our classification system.

Ranganathan, with his analytico-synthetic method of classification, analyzes the subject into constituent elements or facets. Thus any subject may be divided into subcategories by the application of a characteristic of classification.

You will notice a strong influence of Dewey and Ranganathan as we proceed with the presentation. Like Dewey, ours is a hierarchical system. Subjects are divided into 100 categories. Each subject category is further subdivided from the broadest or general to the most minute or specific subject category which is related to the main subject heading.

The main 100 categories are in appendixes no. 1 and 2. No. 1 is the alphabetical listing of the subject categories with corresponding classification numbers. No. 2 is the same list with classification numbers 1 to 100 with corresponding subject headings. All the subjects from nos. 1 to 100 are interrelated. One subject follows the other. No. 1 is general category; no. 2 is ethnic and minority groups; no. 3 political parties and groups; no. 4, forms of government, such as socialism, communism, monarchy, etc. No. 5 is elections; no. 6, legislatures; no. 7, constitution; no. 8, presidency; no. 9, cabinet; no. 10, government administration and so on. Out of these hundred numbers some numbers are left "open" (i.e. some numbers are not assigned to any specific subject). These numbers could be used at a later stage for a new subject which could not be easily included in the present structure

Each major subject category is further subdivided and a letter from the alphabet is assigned to each subdivision. This way each subject category could be subdivided into 26 subdivisions (e.g. 15a, 15b, 15c and so on) and if this seems insufficient, it could be further subdivided: 15p1, 15p2, 15p3 and so on. There is a built-in provision for expansion It is a self-perpetuating classification system. Like Ranganathan's system, it gives the individual classifier the means to construct classification numbers for new foci which will be in accordance with those that the central organization will allot by means of a set of devices or rules.

Each subject category and related division and subdivision can be used according to the needs and usage of the library. Like in the Dewey Decimal Classification, each news item, pamphlet or picture may be assigned to one of the main categories, divisions or subdivisions and "may be identified as belonging to its specific class by use of the appropriate notation." And as in DDC "the number designates the news item's subject category and provides a shorthand identification of the subject."

A large collection of subject files under single subject classification may be arranged in straight alphabetical order (e.g. universities 81p). All the files on various universities could be arranged in alphabetical order under 81p.

The files can be grouped in four categories, one for foreign countries with all the countries arranged in alphabetical order. For major countries there may be more than one file such as for the Soviet Union--S. Union--General, S. Union--Political, S. Union--Economy, S. Union--Foreign Affairs, S. Union--Defense, S. Union--Space Programs. The second group is for subject files, the third for "Personalities" and the fourth group for "Dead Personalities." The idea behind grouping "Living" and "Dead" personality files separately is that demand for the "Dead" personality files is less; the "Living" personality files can be stored where they are more easily accessible. On the folder and the index card for the "Personality" files, the dates of a person's birth, death, and important events in his or her life are typed for easy reference.

Pictures on the same subject, country or personality are filed in separate folders and arranged preceding their respective clipping files. Whether or not there is a picture, cut (metal) or clip file on a particular subject or personality is indicated on the master index card. This method of arranging picture files seems more convenient than looking for clip files in one drawer and picture files somewhere else. The same classification numbers are used for classifying pictures. Picture folders are of a different color than the clip folders and the words "clippings" and "pictures" are stamped on the folders.

For international organizations the same classification numbers can be used with a prefix "Int." for International. This way "World Health Organization" would be "Int. 84" and "World Labor Organization" would be "Int. 54." The numbers 84 and 54 are classification numbers for Health and Labor respectively.

The system, as stated earlier, provides for "minute subdivision of topics" more commonly known as "close classification," as well as for "cross classification"--a situation in which a given work deals with two or more subdivisions of a subject with each subdivision representing a different characteristic of division. Such a situation no doubt creates the possibility of inconsistent classification. As pointed out in Dewey, "a work on weaving cotton cloth deals with two subdivisions of textile technology, cotton (material) and weaving (process) and may be classed with either..."

When classifying a news item one may very well mark the news under three different categories. The main criteria in deciding what number to assign are: (1) bylines, if you maintain a byline file of your reporters, (2) subject--main subject or related subject and (3) personality--names of the people mentioned in the news item. For personality and foreign countries files there are no numbers. There could be more than one clip marked under the subject category for cross filing purposes (e.g. County Commission Meeting discussing air pollution in the area).

In such cases, as you all I am sure are aware, the item can be marked under (1) County Commission, (2) under the names of the people actively participating in the meeting and (3) under the subject "air pollution problem in the community." The decision, of course, would depend upon the needs of a particular newspaper library.

There is also a provision for subjects which cannot be easily classified under any of the main subject categories. Such subjects are filed in alphabetical sequence under classification no. 100 (see appendix #3).

The system is flexible. If a library does not have enough news clips on a particular subject to necessitate a minute or detailed breakdown, then only main subject category numbers would be used. Files on various specific subjects can be "built up" as the need arises.

The principle of mnemonic device is also used. Thus the letter "a" after the classification numbers stands for "a general file" for that particular subject. Thus "2a" would connote "ethnic or minority groups--general," "3a, political parties--general."

Similarly, the letter "b" represents policy-making bodies, laws and regulation pertaining to the main subject. "R" stands for research, 83r Scientific Research, 84r Medical Research. The letter "k" stands for "accidents" (e.g. 49k Traffic Accidents, 50k Rail Accidents, 52k Air Accidents).

How to Use:

Four copies of the newspaper are taken for marking, and the numbers R-1, R-2, L-3 and L-4 written on the top right-hand corners. In the copies marked R-1 and R-2, only news items appearing on the right hand side of the pages are marked and in the copies L-3 and L-4, news items appearing on the left are marked.

The person who clips the marked copies of the paper is expected to check each of these four copies for marked items. Whenever extra copies of the same news item are required for additional subject or personality files, extra copies are marked and the page number on which the item is marked is written on the first page, top right-corner of the paper. The person who clips the paper would only check these pages while cutting.

The classification number is written at the beginning of each news item selected for filing. If the subject appears in the headline or the first paragraph, it is underlined. Otherwise, it is written at the beginning of the item. The names of the people are marked with red pen. This helps in separating subject and personality clips for filing.

After all the marked copies of the paper are clipped, the clips are stamped with the name of the newspaper or magazine and with the date. The clips are then arranged in chronological order and are ready for filing. Personality and foreign countries clips are separated and arranged in alphabetical order for filing.

Once a person acquires familiarity with the main 100 subject categories, he or she will be able to tell what subject a given number denotes. Use of the system brings more familiarity with minor and specific subdivisions. The same guidelines suggested by Dewey are followed for the use of the main subject category list.

This is a brief outline of the alternate classification system. We adopted it at the Journal Herald in August 1969. Before that I worked for about five years at the Times of India, Reference Library, in Bombay, India, where the system was developed to fit the needs of the Times of India Library. A few other newspapers in India have started using this system for their libraries.

We have made considerable changes in the subdivisions of the subject list to meet our needs in Dayton, and we keep changing and updating.

The system is not faultless. It has its shortcomings. But it works well for us.

I present this today with the hope that it will trigger a thought process, a discussion, on the desirability of having an alternate system of classification. I think classification by subject is convenient and practical and there is a real need for some such system in media libraries.

Before I close, I would like to thank Ed Quill, Homer Martin and all the other office-holders for giving me this opportunity to present our system. I will very much appreciate your comments, criticisms, suggestions, opinions, questions or just plain and simple remarks like, "What 'expetive deleted' system of classification is this?"

Appendix 1

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF SUBJECT HEADINGS

A.

ARMY	19
AIR FORCE	21
AGRICULTURE, CROPS	27
AIR TRANSPORT	52
ANIMAL HUSBANDRY	32
AGRICULTURE	26
ARTS & CULTURE	96

B.

BANKING	57
BROADCASTING	88

C.

CABINET	9
CHILDREN	77
CONSTITUTION	7
CINEMA	90
CITIES - TOWNSHIPS	
CRIME	
COMPANY LAW	
COMPANY ADMINISTRATION	47
COMMUNICATION	53
CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	44
CIVIL ENGINEERING	65
COMMERCE, TRADE	69
COSTUMES	
FASHIONS	74
CULTURE	96

D.

DEFENSE	18

E.

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS	17
(Foreign Affairs)	
ELECTIONS	5
ECONOMICS	25
ECOLOGY	85
ENGINEERING	39
(Group of Industries)	
ELECTRICAL GROUP	
(LF Industries)	43
EDUCATION	81
EMIGRATION	64
ETHNIC GROUP	2

F.

FARMS	28
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	17
FOOD	29
FAUNA	31
FOOD INDUSTRY	45
FLORA	30
FORMS OF STATE	4

G.

GOVERNMENT & ADMINISTRATION	10

H.

HISTORY	95
HEALTH	84

I.

INDUSTRIES (General)	37
INDUSTRIAL POLICY	36
IRRIGATION (River Valley Projects)	34
INSURANCE	61
IMMIGRATION	63
INFORMATION (& Broadcasting)	88

J.

JUDICIARY	22
JOURNALISM	75

L.

LAW	23
LOCAL GOVERNMENT	13
LEGISLATURE	6
LANGUAGES	76
LABOR	54

M.

MISCELLANY	1
MUNICIPALITIES	13
MANAGEMENT	55
MARKETS	58
MINERALS & MINING	46
METALURGICAL INDUSTRY	40
MACHINERY MFG.	38
MINORITY GROUPS	2

N.

NAVY 20
NATURAL CALAMITIES & ACCIDENTS 87
NEGROES 2

P.

POLITICAL PARTIES 3
POWER (Energy) 35
PUBLIC FINANCE 59
POLITICS 2
PRESIDENT 8
PRESS 75
PHYSIOGRAPHY 92
PRICES 68
POPULATION 62

R.

ROADS & ROADS TRANSPORT 49
RADIO 88
RELIGION 73
RAILWAYS 50

S.

SEA TRANSPORT (Water Transport) 51
SOCIAL WELFARE 71
STATES 99
SOCIAL PROBLEMS 70

T.

TEXTILE GROUP OF INDUSTRIES 41
TRANSPORT 48
TRANSPORT GROUP OF INDUSTRIES 42
TELEVISION 89

U.

UNIVERSITIES 81
UNUSUAL EVENTS 97
URBANIZATION 66
UNIONS 54

W.

WOMEN 79
WEATHER 86

Y.

YOUTH 78

Appendix 2

A Scheme of Classification
For Newspaper Clippings

MAIN DIVISIONS

1. General
2. Minority Groups
3. Political Parties
4. Forms of State
5. Elections
6. Legislature
7. Constitution
8. President
9. Cabinet
10. Government & Administration
11.
12.
13. Municipalities, Towns, Cities
14. Internal Security
    Law & Order
15. Crime & Violence
16.
17. External Affairs
18. Defense
19. Army
20. Navy
21. Air Force
22. Judiciary
23. Law
24.
25. Economics
26. Agriculture
27. Agricultural Crops
28. Farms
29. Food
30. Flora
31. Fauna
32. Animal Husbandry
33.
34. Irrigation & River Valley Projects Scenic Rivers
35. Power - Electricity
36. Industrial Policy
37. Industries
38. Machinery Manufacturing
39. Engineering Group of Industries
40. Metallurgical Industry
41. Textile Group
42. Transport Group
43. Electrical Group
44. Chemical Group
45. Food Industry
46. Minerals & Mining
47. Company Law & Company Information

48. Transport - General
49. Road & Road Transport
50. Railways
51. Sea Transport
52. Air Transport
53. Communication
54. Labor
55. Management
56. Money & Exchange
57. Banking
58. Markets
59. Public Finance
60. Industrial Finance
61. Insurance
62. Population
63. Immigration
64. Emigration
65. Civil Engineering & Construction
66. Urban Dev. & Renewal
67. Co-operative
68. Prices
69. Trade & Commerce
70. Social, Ethical & Moral Topics
71. Social Welfare
72.
73. Religion
74. Costumes, Fashions
75. Press
76. Languages
77. Children
78. Youth
79. Women
80. Sports & Games
81. Science (Research & Technology)
82.
83.
84. Health & Sanitation
85. Conservation, Ecology, Environment, Pollution, etc.
86. Weather
87. Natural Calamities & Accidents
88. Broadcasting
89. Television
90. Cinema - Films
91.
92. Physiography
93.
94. Geography
95. History
96. Arts & Culture
97. Unusual Events
98.
99. States
100. Miscellaneous

Appendix 3

100 Miscellaneous

Abominable Snowman (Sasquach - Bigfoot)
Bachelors
Bed of Nails
Beggars - Begging (General)
Bells (General)
Boomerangs
Candles
Cannibals - Cannibalism
Centenarians
Chastity Belts
Chimney Sweeps
Coats of Arms
Crowds (General)
Crying
Death
Dinosaurs
Doodles - Doodling
Dreams
Farmer's Almanac
Fire Eaters
Fountains
Freckles
Ghosts
Gifts
Gypsies
Handshakes
Humor
Itinerants - Transients
Kissing
Laughter - Laughing
Left Handers
Magic - Magicians
Masks (General)
Massage Parlors (Masseurs - Masseuses)
Middle Age
Midgets - Dwarfs (Little People of America)
Names
Navels
Noses
Nudism
Paperweights
Pen Pals
Skinny People - Thin People
Slavery
Sleep - Dreams
Sneezing
Spit - Spitting
Superstitions
Tall People

Tickets
Tips
Toothpicks
Totem Poles
Treasure Hunts
Tree Houses
Trivia (General)
Trophies
Uncle Sam
Voodoo
Washboards
Windmills
Witches - Witchcraft
Yawning